

## PRIORITY GROWTH AREAS

***Focus development in community-identified growth areas, both infill redevelopment sites and land in and immediately around existing or proposed centers, rather than encouraging most new construction on outlying greenfields or farmland.***

### Fill in the Gaps First

Gaps in the streetscape, including empty parcels, derelict buildings, and especially oversized parking lots, break the traditional row of storefronts along the main streets and need infill repair, just like a missing tooth in a smile. With the wholesale demolition of the 1950s and 1960s Urban Renewal period, flight to the suburbs, and abandonment of many large manufacturing sites, there are abundant opportunities to heal the empty spots in and directly around cities, villages, and hamlet centers.

A community can start with an inventory of potential redevelopment sites and a set of strategies to attract infill interest. You should not only look for vacant properties, but also existing buildings that could be substantially expanded on the site or marginal structures that are clearly incompatible with historic areas. Often just the act of identification through a community sanctioned public process will spur action by existing owners or outside investors. Publicly owned properties or larger redevelopment sites can be advertised through a Request for a Proposal (RFP) process to solicit competitive ideas for redevelopment.

*Infill project based on traditional neighborhood patterns for three single-family houses with shared driveway and rear garages on a half-acre vacant lot in Millbrook.*



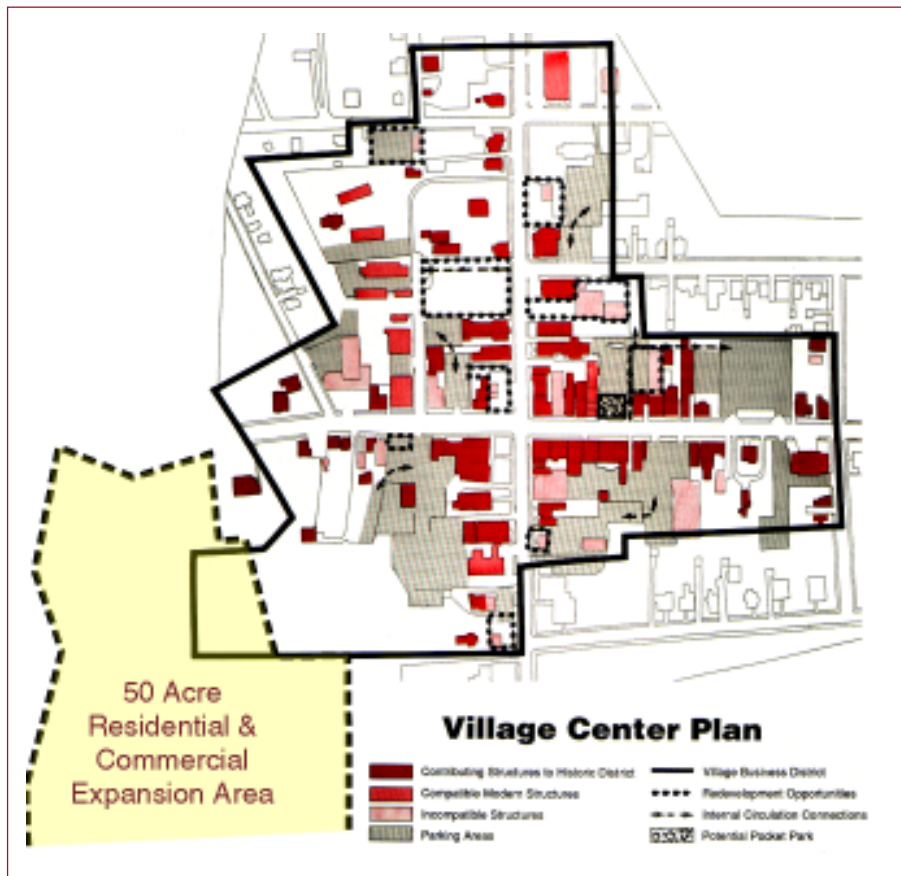
*Construction crane places modular two-family house on a narrow infill lot in the City of Poughkeepsie*

## Priority Expansion Areas

Building close to existing population centers makes communities more walkable and efficiently takes advantage of infrastructure already in place, such as streets, transit lines, water and sewer systems, parks, and schools. Also, as hamlets, villages, and city neighborhoods organically grow and fill in, they can support a wider range of activities for their residents. Dispersed development wastes both rural land and everyone's tax dollars, extending expensive services to outlying areas.

### Key Strategies for Compact Communities

- Town, village, and city plans should identify land in or near centers that can be targeted for development, consistent with design guidelines, as well as sensitive land and historic properties that need to be protected.
- Ideal high priority development districts include vacant or underutilized land within walking distance of traditional centers, logically extending the existing compact neighborhood patterns.
- Communities can shift development from outlying farm properties or important scenic land to priority growth areas through a coordinated rezoning process, a transfer of development rights program, or other incentives.
- Towns can identify locations for new centers, either in the immediate vicinity of existing residential areas without services or in prime locations along public transportation routes. The Hyde Park Plan, for example, encourages growth in existing core areas and the transformation of large outlying subdivisions into mixed use neighborhoods.



*Rhinebeck's Master Plan identifies specific infill redevelopment sites, as well as a 50-acre parcel within easy walking distance to the Village Center for commercial and residential expansion.*

#### Sources:

Urban Land Institute, *Smart Growth, Economy, Community, Environment*, 1998



## WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

***Plan for pedestrians as a top priority in all cities, villages, and town centers, creating a safe and attractive network of side-walks and crosswalks within a 2,000-foot radius of the center.***

One of the fundamental requirements of a successful center is making people feel comfortable walking around. Virtually everyone is a walker, if you include wheelchair users who also need good sidewalks. And walkers are shoppers. Except for banks and burger joints, people still have to get out of their cars to become customers. Attractive sidewalks are the economic lifeblood of centers, good for bottom-line business by enticing people to browse from store to store, rather than making only one quick stop.

A convenient sidewalk system insures a proper balance between walking and vehicles, helping to restore the street as a social space. Too often walkers are only considered obstructions to the flow of faster traffic, even though slower speeds are essential in centers. Over 80% of pedestrians are killed in 40 mph accidents, while only 15% die at 20 mph. One out every seven traffic fatalities are pedestrians (1 of 4 in New York State), so we need to put a much higher priority on safe sidewalks and crosswalks.

### The First Steps to Walkability

#### Step 1 - Take photos or videotape your streets

If the main sidewalks are not fairly full in the afternoons and friends are not stopping for long conversations on the corners, go to Step 2.

#### Step 2 - Observe and talk to seniors and kids

Over 30% of people cannot drive because of age, income, or disability. If a 12-year-old and her grandpa cannot easily walk from their homes to the center, find a nice place to sit, and some interesting things to do, go to Step 3.

#### Step 3 - Map all pedestrian features

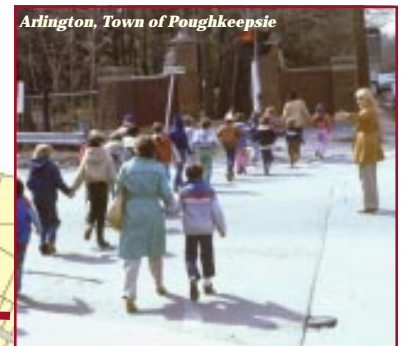
Do an inventory of sidewalks, crosswalks, benches, bus stops, bike racks, and high pedestrian generators (post offices, schools, public parking, etc.), as well as obstacles to walking, such as 30+ mph or overly wide roads, lack of sidewalks and crosswalks, no buffer from traffic, gaps between storefronts, or stores behind parking lots.

#### Step 4 - Agree on a list of priority projects

Work with public officials, business owners, and other key groups to fill in the gaps to a continuous walking network, beginning with easier tasks like striping new crosswalks, mapping sidewalk extensions, and getting local boards to include pedestrian enhancements in every site plan.



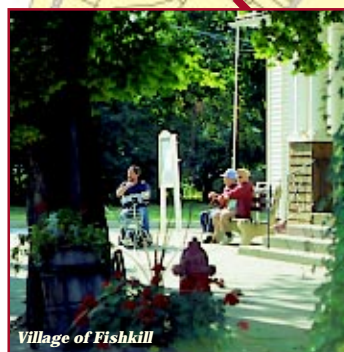
Arlington, Town of Poughkeepsie



Arlington, Town of Poughkeepsie



Village of Red Hook



Village of Fishkill

*A continuous pedestrian network within about 2,000 feet, or an easy 10-minute walk of the center, encourages walking for short trips, to nearby schools, and between stores in the business area.*

## Pedestrian-Friendly Guidelines

### Sidewalk Design:

- 5-foot minimum width (6-foot wide better); 8 to 15 feet in main street commercial areas.
- 7-foot minimum height clearance.
- Durable materials (concrete or brick pavers best).
- At least 5 feet (preferably 6 feet) back from curb to separate walkers from traffic and road spray, allow room for street trees and snow storage, and prevent side slopes at each driveway.
- Meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

### Sidewalk Locations:

- Both sides along central circulation streets, in commercial districts, near schools, and in residential areas with more than 4 units per acre.
- At least on one side in residential areas with 1 to 4 units per acre.
- Optional one side or wide shoulder in areas with less than 1 unit per acre.

### Crosswalks:

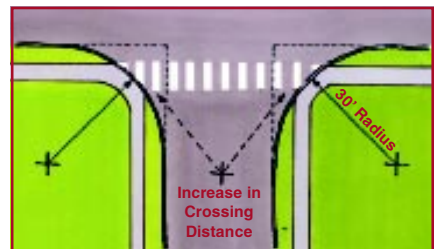
- As short as possible with small corner radii.
- About 10 feet wide, well lit, boldly marked with bar stripes or textured surface, and at every major intersection and selected higher volume mid-block crossings.

### Traffic:

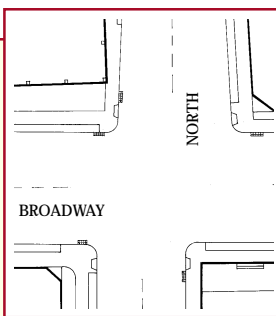
- Slow speeds to under 30 mph in centers, preferably under 20 mph in higher pedestrian areas.
- Provide pedestrian signals and eliminate right turn on red at major crossing locations.



New York drivers need to be reminded that walkers have rights too. Additional crosswalks with bold markings will help announce equal access for walkers and cars in centers.



Corner radii in centers should be as small as possible to shorten crosswalks and slow down turning vehicles. Where a traditional 5 to 10-foot radius produces a 36-foot crossing distance, a new 30-foot radius can create a 60-foot crosswalk.



A redesign for the "four corners" intersection in Tivoli calls for textured brick crosswalks, street trees, and flared sidewalks out to the parking lanes to slow traffic, increase pedestrian visibility, and prevent illegal parking too close to the intersection.



***Pedestrians are the lost measure of a community... To plan as if there were pedestrians may be a self-fulfilling act.***

***Peter Calthorpe***

### Sources:

Anton Nelessen, *Visions for a New American Dream*, 1993

Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis, Ecology, Community, and the American Dream*, 1993